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MEDIA ADVISORY
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MUTILATED SEAL CASE UPDATE

NEW CASTLE, NEW HAMPSHIRE: United States Attorney Tom Colantuono and Department of Commerce, NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service Special Agent in Charge Gino Moro of the Northeast Enforcement Division, announced an important development in the investigation of a case involving two mutilated seals found at Hampton Beach in July and August of 2003. These two male seals, one a harbor seal, and one a gray seal, had been skinned and had missing body parts. It is a violation of the Marine Mammal Protection Act of 1972 to take any marine mammal on the high seas, and it is a further violation to sell or export any marine mammal or marine mammal product. Authorities suspect that the body parts were removed for sale overseas where they are considered to be an aphrodisiac. Violations of the Marine Mammal Protection Act are Class A misdemeanors and are punishable by up to one year in prison and a fine of up to \$20,000 per offense. One of the seals was discovered at Hampton Beach on July 10, 2003, and the other was discovered on August 9, 2003.

There is an ongoing investigation headed by the Department of Commerce, NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service, Office for Law Enforcement. The United States Attorney's Office has had a long-standing relationship with the National Marine Fisheries Service, Office for Law Enforcement and a strong record of working together to solve environmental and resource protection crimes. The National Marine Fisheries Service, Office for Law Enforcement is being assisted in this investigation by other federal and state agencies, including the United States Coast Guard, the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department, the New Hampshire Marine Patrol, the Maine Marine Patrol, and the Massachusetts Environmental Police.

Investigators have received much helpful information from the public after this case became publicized, including information about other possibly related seal deaths. However, authorities have not yet been able to solve this crime with the information known to date. In the hope that further information about these crimes may be available, the National Marine Fisheries Service, Office of Law Enforcement, would like to announce the creation of a reward fund created through the efforts of Special Agent Chris Schoppmeyer. The contributors to the fund and the total amount of the fund are set forth on the attachment.

MUTILATED SEAL CASE UPDATE ATTACHMENT

The Department of Commerce, NOAA, National Marine Fisheries Service, Office for Law Enforcement hereby announces the establishment of a reward fund for information leading to the successful arrest and prosecution of the person or persons responsible for the deaths of two seals found at Hampton Beach on July 10, 2003 and August 9, 2003. The National Marine Fisheries Service, Office for Law Enforcement, would like to thank the following contributors who have made donations to this fund:

The New Hampshire Chapter of the Coastal Conservation Association

Smuttynose Brewery

Humane Society, USA

Margarita's Mexican Restaurant

Dawley Construction Company

The Gaslight Restaurant

Tucker Construction Company

The total amount of the reward fund at the present time is \$7,850.00. There may be additional amounts added to this fund. This reward is being offered with the hope that persons having information about these crimes will come forward to report what they know. At the request of any person coming forward with information, all information provided will remain confidential until necessary to proceed in court. If any member of the public has information about these crimes, they should contact Special Agent Chris Schoppmeyer at 603/436-3186 extension 224.